



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 30, 2012

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Afghan Midwives Honored for Saving Lives of Women and Newborns

KABUL, AFGHANISTAN | APRIL 30, 2012 – Afghanistan's Ministry of Public Health hosted an award ceremony in Kabul today celebrating the International Day of the Midwife in conjunction with the closing of the Eight Annual Afghan Midwives Association Congress held on April 28- 29. Afghan Minister of Public Health Dr. Suraya Dalil, Minister of Women's Affairs Dr. Husn Banu Ghazanfar, member of the Afghan Parliament Fawzia Kofi and other Afghan and U.S. Government officials and donor community representatives attended the ceremony.

The presence of a skilled provider at birth is a key factor in reducing the risk of maternal death. In line with Millennium Development Goal to reduce maternal mortality by 75% by 2014, the Ministry of Public Health is committed to reducing high levels of maternal and newborn mortality by increasing the number of trained and skilled midwives at birth, particularly in remote and rural areas of Afghanistan.

"We believe Afghan midwives are true heroes in this country—not only saving lives every day but empowering women as community leaders," said the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Health Services Support Project representative, Denise Byrd.

USAID supports midwifery education by providing grants and technical assistance to midwifery education programs in 13 provinces of Afghanistan. Since 2003, USAID has worked with the MoPH to train more than 1750 midwives in Afghanistan—representing approximately half of all midwives currently in the country.

The International Day of the Midwife was inaugurated twenty years by the International Confederation of Midwives, as a day to celebrate midwifery and increase public awareness of the important work done by midwives in improving maternal and newborn health. The International Day of the Midwife is globally celebrated on May 5.

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